Discussion on Pak-Afghan situation

*9. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prime Minister and the US President discussed the situation in Pakistan and Afghanistan on the sidelines of the G-20 conference;

(b) if so, whether US plans a bigger role in Indo-Pak affairs;

(c) whether US President's Afghan-Pak strategy adds Iran, Russia and China as key partners in dealing with Al-Qaeda;

(d) if so, the outcome of the discussions held;

(e) whether India has conveyed its willingness to join terror fight in Afghanistan and Pakistan; and

(f) if so, to what extent India's participation has helped?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR): (a) At their meeting in London on 2nd April, 2009 on the sidelines of G-20 meeting, Prime Minister and the US President discussed regional and global issues, including the threat that terrorism emanating from our neighbourhood poses to all free societies and the international efforts that are required to deal with this problem. They had a significant convergence of views and approaches in this regard. President Obama informed PM of the new comprehensive US strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan. Prime Minister welcomes his clear enunciation of the problems and goals.

(b) While speaking to the Press on June 19, 2009, the US President conveyed, "Pakistan and India can be in a dialogue together and over time to try to reduce tensions and find areas of common interest and we want to be helpful in that process, but I don't think it's appropriate for us to be the mediators in that process. I think that this is something that the Pakistanis and Indians can take leadership on". India's long-standing policy is that relations between India and Pakistan are a bilateral matter and there is no requirement for mediation by third parties in any bilateral issue.

(c) and (d) The United States Administration has, to our knowledge, consulted several Governments on its strategy with regard to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

(e) and (f) Both leaders agreed that India and the USA must work together to counter the forces of terror. India will continue to play a constructive role, working to build peace and stability in our neighbourhood. We have underway a large and effective reconstruction and assistance programme in Afghanistan.

Assistance to States to promote rural tourism

*10. DR. E.M. SUDARSANA NATCHIAPPAN: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) the steps that are being taken to promote rural tourism in India;